

# Intermediate step on Public Light Buses

With a view to improving Public Light Bus (PLB) services and addressing public views about the high PLB compartment, which causes inconvenience to the elderly and people with mobility problems, the Government will require Green Minibuses (GMBs) and Red Minibuses (RMBs) which are newly registered on or after August 15, 2017 and September 15, 2017 respectively to be equipped with several passenger facilities, after following up and studying the matter with the PLB trade. At present, around 400 newly registered PLBs are equipped with additional seat handles and call bells with indicator lights, while 85 PLBs have been installed with newly designed intermediate step.

A spokesman for the Transport Department (TD) today (July 20) said that all the above-mentioned passenger facilities can help passengers in taking PLB services. Nevertheless, regarding the newly installed intermediate step, the TD has decided to cancel the requirement for PLBs to install intermediate step with effect from July 23, 2018, after conducting a detailed review on the results of the two different designs and inspecting the actual operation, as well as considering opinions from the trade. For those PLBs currently installed with this facility, the trade will arrange to remove it on their own.

The spokesman noted that the newly registered GMBs and RMBs were originally required to install the intermediate step by mid-August 2017 and mid-September 2017 respectively. However, the TD has received reports of passengers tripping over while alighting the PLBs. The TD is very concerned about these cases, and has therefore suspended the requirement for installing the intermediate step on PLBs. The TD then worked closely with the PLB manufacturers for a revised design and exchanged views with the trade and conducted on-site trials with them. Moreover, the TD invited an elderly group to conduct a trial on the new design of intermediate step.

However, since the roll-out of the new design in mid-May this year, up till now there have been cases of passengers tripping over while boarding PLBs. The TD has re-examined the issue and conducted on-board surveys. As the total number of PLBs installed with the facility is currently still small, quite a number of passengers are not fully aware of the intermediate step. Moreover, PLBs in Hong Kong operate on busy roads with a high passenger volume and frequent picking up and dropping off of passengers. With such a fast-paced lifestyle, passengers may trip over the intermediate step when boarding or alighting the PLBs. In view of this and after careful consideration of the review results of the two different intermediate step, the TD has decided to cancel the requirement for PLBs to install intermediate step for the sake of prudence.

In taking forward the concept of "Transport for All", the TD will continue to work with the PLB trade to improve PLB services by introducing

more low-floor PLB models and so forth. In fact, with the aim of assisting wheelchair users in using PLB services, the Government introduced a low-floor wheelchair-accessible PLB trial scheme early this year. The TD will review the operational effectiveness of the trial scheme, including aspects such as technical and operational feasibility, repair and maintenance and passengers' feedback. The TD will discuss with the trade on further promoting low-floor PLBs if the trial scheme proves to be effective.